

A F U L L
CONFUTATION
O F
Witchcraft:

More particularly of the
DEPOSITIONS

Against

JANE WENHAM,

Lately Condemned for a

WITCH; at Hertford.

In which

The Modern Notions of Witches are
overthrown, and the Ill Consequences
of such Doctrines are exposed by Ar-
guments; proving that,

Witchcraft is Priestcraft.

A Natura multa, plura ficta, à Demone nulla.

*In a Letter from a Physician in Hert-
fordshire, to his Friend in London.*

L O N D O N :

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CONSTITUTION

OF

WITCHAMSTADT:

More particularly of the

DEPOSITIONS

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London

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A FULL
CONFUTATION
OF
Witchcraft, &c.

S I R,

TH O' the Province you have assign'd me is the last I should have undertaken, by my own Consent, yet a Request from you, carrying the Force of an absolute Command along with it, I have ventur'd to give you my hasty Thoughts upon a Subject which otherwise should have pass'd amongst the rest of the pious Frauds that have plagu'd and distracted Mankind.

I am fully aware to what Hazards a Man of a Publick Character, exposes his Reputation to, in talking freely,

much more in writing on such a Topic, especially in the Country, where to make the least Doubt, is a Badge of Infidelity; and not to be superstitious, passes for a dull Neutrality in Religion, if not a direct Atheism. And here, *Sir*, I cannot but envy one Privilege you enjoy in Town, which is, a Freedom of Thought and Talk, whilst we are very often reduc'd to the Necessity of swallowing the greatest Improbabilities, without the least Change of Countenance, for fear of offending any Bigot of Figure. To offer any Reason in Bar of their Perswasion, would be call'd an Attempt upon their Judgments; so that in all popular Errors, if we discover the least Incredulity, we run the Risque of being taken for Men of no Religion; or if we pretend to be implicit Believers, we play the Hypocrite with our Reason and Conscience. But as to my own part, who never yet came under the slavish Ties of popular Compliances, or ever suffer'd my Judgment to mingle with the Crowd, am not very tender of contradicting any Opinion, how powerfully soever supported, where I see any tendency in it towards enslaving Mankind,

or establishing Error on the Foot of Pride and Superstition. I am glad so judicious and penetrating a Judge went the Circuit, who could not be impos'd upon by the stale Artifice of Exorcisms, or suffer his Faith to bend to an enchanted Feather. His rational Distrust of so many Improbabilities, I hope, will be a lasting Precedent to others in that venerable Station; so that hereafter we may not have that Waste of Humane Blood in every Village, upon the wild Testimonies of a parcel of Brain-sick People, who often stand in need of Dieting and Shaving themselves.

What I have to say upon this Head being to be compriz'd within the Compass of a Letter, I shall not enter upon a long Dissertation of the distinct Species of Evil Spirits, or the Difference the Learned make between them; but directly fall upon examining the Absurdity and Inconsistency of the late Depositions against *Jane Wenham*. 2dly, Shew that all our Proofs of Witchcraft, are very fallacious, and consequently ought never to extend to Life. And in the last place, That the pretended Exorcisms practis'd on *Anne Thorn,*

Thorn, are meer spiritual Juggles, and the very Spirit of Priest-craft.

Of all the ridiculous Stories that have been vamp'd up to seduce and impose upon the credulous Part of Mankind, I never yet met with any one usher'd in with such a Farce, as that of *Matthew Gliston's* being sent upon a Fool's Errand to fetch Straw from a Dunghil, leap three Miles, without having any further Violence offered to him. This was a sportive sort of Witch-craft; and *Jane Wenham's* Familiar at that time, was a merry Droll, he must be rank'd amongst that Species of Demons, of which they say there are but thirty Thousand who divert themselves with wild Pranks here upon Earth, and sometimes are said to do agreeable Services to Mankind. But setting this aside, how natural is it to conjecture, that this Fellow, in order to ingratiate himself with his Master, and knowing the Spleen he bore *Jane Wenham*, to contrive this foolish Capriccio of his own, which, how ridiculous and unaccountable soever it may sound, still makes it more the ignorant Fellow's own Invention, and could not fail of being digested by all Degrees of People, after they had proclaim'd her

her a Witch for some Years? But can any Man in his serious Thoughts believe a Spirit to be an Actor in so comical a Part as is here represented? Can it enter any Man's Heart to conceive, that any Familiar, or Demon, would engage in such Trifles, to come and play idle insignificant Pranks, enter a humane Body, force it against its Will to such a place, and *cui Bono*, why truly, for a pennyworth of Straw, and to bring it home in his Shirt. These are such crude, indigested Stories, as would scarce pass upon the poor ignorant Lap-landers.

This was only design'd, I presume, as a merry Prologue, to make the Auditors laugh, till the Curtain was drawn, and the Scene open'd, where the rest of the Entertainment is equally diverting: *Jane Wenham* is affronted for being call'd Witch by *Chapman*, *Mr. Gardiner* the Parson is made Referree of the Difference, assigns her but a Shilling Damage; which she resenting, said, she would have Justice somewhere else, if she could not have it there. Though there was nothing harsh in that Expression of *Jane Wenham's*, but what might drop from any Person either conscious

scious to herself, or not conscious of the Crime she was accused, considering the Provocation was so great in the Eye of the World, and the Damage assign'd her was so small; yet upon an Accident falling out in Mr. *Gardiner's* Family, this Expression of hers is wrested to a Threatning of some dreadful Revenge upon the Parson's House. But here a modest Query may arise: Why did not the Blow fall directly upon the Parson, who had injur'd her, or transferr'd to so remote a Branch of his regard as that of a Servant? That Question, upon second Thoughts, may be too free: What! Thunder-strike Oaks? What! a Clergy-man lie exposed to the Fury of the Devil? No, no, they are all of the holy Seed, and cannot be reach'd by any infernal Power: So the Man of God being impregnable, the poor Maid, who is describ'd equally as innocent, is left to stand the Shock. And really the first prank is very extraordinary: *Anne Thorn* finding a Roaming in her Head, and thinking on *Jane Wenham*, is with her lame Knee, all on a sudden, transported against her Will, half a Mile, climbs over a Five-Bar-gate to
gather

gather some Sticks, meets an Old Woman, who gives her a crooked Pin to pin up the Sticks in her Apron, and Gown, and so she returns, and Mrs. *Gardiner* finds her stripp'd upon her Return. A strange and wonderful Account, and all done in the space of seven Minutes, which would take up seven Years to make good Proof of. Now the genuine Account of the Matter seems to lie thus: *Anne Thorn* sitting by the Kitchen Fire musing, and her Spirits being under a growing Disorder, as we may rationally suppose they were, by the Sequel: Such an irregular Motion as stripping her self, might strike upon her Fancy, and she be prompted to take off her Gown, and gather up a few Oaken Twigs, which lie generally loose about a Kitchen Hearth, and make them up in a Bundle: That being seiz'd with an Epileptick Fit, as the Symptom of finding a Roaming in her Head (by which, no doubt, she meant a Giddiness or Vertigo) plainly indicates, *Jane Wenham*, who was in her Thoughts just at her going into the Fit, might very probably beat strongly upon her Imagination, during that Paroxysm; and that Mrs. *Gardiner* coming in at the

Close of the Fit, and finding her in that disorder'd Posture, *Anne Thorn* related to her what was so warm upon her Fancy. This is natural to suppose, without stretching of Reason, or common Sense. But here was a very good Handle for a Story against the suspected *Jane Wenham*; and when they were furnish'd with such Materials from the poor Delirant, they might as well make a Wild-Goose Chase of it, as let the Scene be confin'd to so narrow a Compass as the Chimney-Corner. Evidence in such a Case could not be long a procuring; no doubt, the whole Parish, after a Prepossession of *Jane Wenham's* being a Witch for many Years, could not fail of believing any Thing against her, even in Opposition to their Senses. Accordingly two of *John Chapman's* Men are pitch'd upon as Witnesses to this Half-Mile-Course of *Anne Thorn's*; one of which, I presume, was the Fellow that was sent to pick Straws three Miles, and had not worn that Journey out of his Head; and another (as discerning a Spirit as himself) Evidence that perhaps might justly hang a Day for Sheep-biting. This, I say, seems to be a plain and full

full Account of the first Adventure. But when People come to talk positively, and depose the several Passages as are related by *Anne Thorn*, upon Oath, they are shocking to every common Ear. In a true Laxation of the Knee, it is impossible to walk, the Bone being out of its proper Socket, rendring the Motion of the Muscles altogether useless. If it was only a violent Extension of the Rotula, something might be allow'd: But it's hard to tell what this was, your Country Bone-Setters seldom plaguing their Heads with Distinctions.

Now here, if I might find room for Belief, I would rather place *Anne Thorn* amongst the Number of Maniacks, than Demoniacs, for they really bespeak something more than Hysterical: Her frequent Ravings, her lucid Intervals, her strong Imagination, her more than ordinary Strength, are Symptoms which agree well enough with Mad People; her frequent Calling out upon *Jane Wenham*, as the Source of all her Woe, no doubt, was owing to an Idea strongly impress'd upon her Brain, of *Jane Wenham's* being a Witch, and a mis-

chievous Person, improved by an heated Imagination, and raised to a Pitch of Fury against her by the quick and impetuous Motion of the animal Spirits, and rapid Motion of the Blood.

As to that Objection which lies in my way, of *Anne Thorn's* appearing very composed, and free from any Disorder of Mind, before she was seiz'd with these Fits. It is answered, That generally before Maniacs, or mad People, fall into their Distemper, there is a great Calm and Slowness of Motion in the Animal Spirits, which occasions a very slow Motion in the Humours about the Bowels, and very often a Stagnation, that disposes them to a particular sort of Putrefaction, whence gradually proceeding some putrid, sharp, and salin Particles that oppress the Animal Spirits, and dull their Motion, till they separate gradually, and mix with the whole Mass of Blood, then at length great Crowds issuing out, do violently stimulate and hurry the Animal Spirits into that Fury and Tempest.

As to her seeing an Old Woman muffled up in a Riding-Hood, and giving her a crooked Pin, and then vanishing,

nishing, is all ridiculous and fanciful. For in less Indispositions than this poor Maid is reported to labour under, we find People, either thro' a Viciousness of Sight, or by a certain Situation of Objects, they believe they see that which really is not. In nervous Cases, does it not often happen, that by a certain Motion of our Eyes, Objects appear to us otherwise than they seem to us when without this Motion? In short, our Senses are allow'd to be great Deceivers. But I take this Apparition of the Old Woman in a Riding hood to be the effect of a deprav'd Imagination; Fear, Terror, and Rage, had so distracted her Brain, and multiply'd so many monstrous Idea's of *Jane Wenham's* destructive Power, that *Anne Thorn* could, in case of need, have, by the Strength of her warm Fancy, transform'd Old *Jane* into more Shapes and Figures, than she or her Familiar were able to do.

After this, *Anne Thorn* is represented to us falling into Trembling and Convulsions, and upon her Recovery, impell'd to go and fetch more Sticks, without which she should never be well, and leaping over Five-Bar-Gates in her Passage;

Passage; and that she was hindred from going any further by *Jane Wenham*, who stood in the Way to intercept her. place this Account with the Evidence, as I do the other amongst the Mid-summer-Night's Dreams, and do deny it to be in the Power of any Person, the World calls a Witch, or Familiar, to force any Person against their Wills upon such trifling Errands; or to act so upon them, as to make them leap Five-Bar-Gates, &c. As to the *First*, If it be said that a Demon, Witch, or Spirit, forces any Creature to act in such and such a manner, I demand in the next place, how he forces him? Does he absolutely deprive him of the Liberty of doing what he pleases? How came he by this Power? Has he it from himself, or from some Superior Being? I believe few are so sanguine to affirm, that he has of himself the Power of forcing Men to do whatever he pleases, without their being able to avoid submitting to his Decrees. If it be urg'd, that he holds this Power of the Supreme Being, what Proof can be produc'd of it? Whatever Arguments can be form'd to prove this, Can it possibly suit with the Divine Wisdom

Wisdom and Goodness? Is there any Agreement betwixt so immense a Power lodg'd in a wicked and revengeful Spirit, and the Divine Love to Mankind, joined with his Knowledge of their Weakness, and how easily they are captivated and surpriz'd by his Wiles? As to the Second, 'tis no difficult matter to say a Witch's Familiar, Demon, (or what you please, amongst the vast Variety of Names to call them) can do this or that; but this does not convince every thinking Person of his or her preternatural Power. Let's make a familiar Instance: No Spirit acts otherwise than by its own Will, and its Will consists in nothing but a bare Thought. Then I demand, how our own Spirit, that is our Soul, does the least thing to our Bodies, if it be true that this is done by Thought? If it is our Will, our Foot and Hand move, and in such a manner as we would have them. Let us try the same on another Body which is not ours, without the Interposition of our own. Let's try a little only by Thought, to make a Body, or the Resemblance or Shade of any one in any Place whatever here on Earth, or in the Air.

Now

How then should a Demon or Familiar do this, who has no Body of his own? But setting aside this, perhaps as a little too abstruse, you'll say perhaps, the Supreme Being permits this Demon or Familiar to enter the Body of the Person, and so actuate it as it pleases. What a Chain of Absurdities must we admit of here. Here we must suppose God working a Miracle upon every trifling Occasion, to oblige the evil Spirits; as if Miracles were not too much to grant them, considering how strongly they are bent to do Mankind Mischief; and not only this, but likewise indulge them in several apish, ridiculous Pranks, which they continually abuse, to the Dishonour of the Creator, and the Damage of his innocent Creatures, and to sum up this Inconsistency, all to humour some poor, decrepid, silly Old Woman. I pass by a Hurdle of Follies, much of the same Nature, till *Jane Wenham* is brought to *Anne Thorn*, who long'd to satiate her self with her Blood: Accordingly *Jane Wenham* comes to her, and *Anne Thorn's* Colour and Speech returns, and she scratches *Jane Wenham's* Forehead, but could fetch

no Blood, which occasioned a very sage Remark. Now, who but a pack of Idiots, could have expected a Torrent of Blood, or indeed but a few Drops, from a shrivell'd Old Forehead, which, if squeez'd and collected, would not yeild half an Ounce? and even in its most florid State, is but a dry Muscle, and the Vein a rowling one, not easily to be launch'd by a Finger-Nail.

After this, we find *Jane Wenham* submitting to be searh'd, and willing to undergo all those Trials that never fail of discovering a Witch, according to the Country Probations; but this we find pass'd by as unnecessary at that time, but afterwards try'd to no purpose; tho' if any of those Persons concern'd in her Arraignment, had from their Souls believ'd her as they represented her, I am apt to believe, they would have been likewise satisfied in that Point, as well as given to other ridiculous Notions and Experiments, as burning the Bundle of Sticks, and the Pin, and the Feathers, &c. But now comes on the famous Trial of Skill, about repeating the Lord's-Prayer. The Reverend Mr. *Strut*, the chief Champion in the Lists, and his Fel-

low Labourer Mrs. Gardiner, against a poor ignorant Old Woman. *Impar congressus*: And great Stress is laid upon her repeating, *Lead us not into Temptation*, with two Negatives. Now I would venture a small Wager upon it, take *England* round, and there are 3 Parts in 4 of the Country People pronounce that Sentence generally after this manner. But not putting this infallible Touch-stone upon so uncertain an Issue, as coming from the Mouth of a Reverend Divine; It may be worth the while to enquire, whether too many of the Auditors were not very curious in watching every Lapse of her Tongue, or preventing her Repetition of those Words, with too many impertinent Questions, or alarming her with the suppos'd Impossibility of repeating them. But drawing off from Conjectures, I would fain know how the false Pronunciation of that Sentence particularly, came to be the *Criterion* of a Witch; I think none of our Rubricks enjoin it as a specifick Trial, and I hope, no learned Divine has borrow'd it either from a Popish Legend, or found it amongst some Country Receipts for a Strain, a Quaking-Pudding, or a Cut-Finger:

Finger: No, we cannot think so meanly of any Branch of the sacred Body. Then let's come a little closer to the Point, and try it by dint of Reason. It would be some Satisfaction to know, why a Witch, &c. as the Reverend call poor old *Jane*, should boggle at one Sentence more than another. The Reason assign'd, I presume, is, that they being conscious of running voluntarily into Temptation, have not the Face to pray that God would prevent them from falling into it; whereby the Reverend allow their Witch some Grace. But pray then, with what Front can such a Creature say, *Our Father*, &c. when she has renounc'd God, and resign'd her self up to the Devil by Contract? How can she say, *Thy Will be done*, when she is continually employ'd in the Devil's Service? In fine, How can she pray, *Thy Kingdom come*, or for the second Coming of Christ to Judgment, when she must expect by that Judgment to be irreversibly damn'd? But here's a very strong Argument they bring to confirm the Guilt of *Jane Wenham*, viz. her falling down at Mrs. Gardiner's Feet, before she gave in her Information, and begging her not to swear a-

gainst her, using many Expressions of Fear, least she should be sent to Goal. Now with me it's a moot Point, whether *Jane Wenham's* earnest Entreaty to Mrs. *Gardiner*, not to swear against her, does not seem rather a tender Regard to Mrs. *Gardiner's* Soul, for fear she should Perjure her self in her Deposition, than a Discovery of her own Guilt. But setting that aside, *Jane Wenham* might very readily suggest to her self, that Mrs. *Gardiner* being the prime Undertaker in this Affair, a fierce Bigot, and a superstitious Believer of whatever dropt from *Anne Thorn's* Mouth in her raving Fits, might, by a heat of Passion, peculiar to such Zealots, give some Colourings of her own to the ridiculous Account she was to relate: And *Jane Wenham* being a poor helpless Creature, detested by the whole Parish, upon the Supposition of her being a Witch, being sensible of the Weight and Authority of such an Evidence, and that her Fate in a great measure depended upon her Deposition, might, amidst those anxious Fears and Cares, be allow'd to solicit Mrs. *Gardiner's* Favour, without the least Colour of Suspicion. Then as to expressing

sing her Fears of being sent to Goal, there is so little Strefs to be laid upon it, that nothing could have justify'd the Mention of it, but only that it serves to make this Collection of Prodigies more curious. For who is there without dismal Apprehensions of a Goal? Who thinks of Confinement without Horror? Much more might such an abandon'd Wretch, who had neither Friends or Money, dread being sent there, when, under her Circumstances, she could expect nothing less than a Course of Misery and Hardship worse than Death.

As to the Information of *Susan Aylott*, it's so disjointed, and even conjectural, after her own Way of telling the Story, that it deserves no Remark.

Thomas Adams's is likewise of the same Complexion. He, it seems, has 3 or 4 fat Sheep die of the Megrim, by feeding in too rank Pasture; and because this poor old Creature was seen in his Turnip-Field, *ergo* she bewitch'd his Sheep. Fair Consequences, and which, if made use of, might serve to condemn all the innocent People of a Parish, as well as the guilty, in the space of a Year.

Another Wise-acre swears he came within 3 Minutes of *Jane Wenham's* threat-

threatning *Anne Thorn* ; and if he had been in the *Indies* at that time, 'twas as much to the Purpose.

But here is some seeming weight in what comes next : Mr. *Strut* having renew'd his Proof of *Jane Wenham's* Guilt, by her not repeating a particular Sentence or two in the Lord's-Prayer ; after his Dialect (which I have already shewn to be inconclusive) asks her, if she had any hand in bewitching *Anne Thorn* ; to which at first she gave no positive Answer ; but upon Mr. *Strut's* telling her how beneficial such a Confession would be to her own Soul, and others, if she was guilty, she began to relent, and in the Presence of Mr. *Gardiner*, and her Kinsman *Archer*, Mr. *Strut* ask'd her sincerely to tell him whether she was a Witch ? she said she was : Then he ask'd her, whether she had not an hand in bewitching *Anne Thorn* ? she said she had, but there was another concern'd with her : Then he ask'd what induc'd her to it ? she said, the Girl had once vex'd her. Then she was ask'd, whether she did not meet *Anne Thorn* on Tuesday Morning ? To which she answer'd, No : But being ask'd, whether it was not her Familiar ? she answer'd in the affirmative.

tive. She likewise confess'd, she had liv'd in that Course of Life above 16 Years: She then being ask'd, what induc'd her to that Familiarity with the Devil? Said, it was a malicious and wicked Mind; for when any of her Neighbours vex'd her, she us'd horrid Curses and Imprecations, on which the Devil took Advantage over her.

With Submission to this Reverend Divine, I think that all the Questions are very superficial, and ensnaring, and half of them such as she knew not the meaning of. As to the first, Whether she was a Witch, she is said to confess her self to be so: Whereas, if his second Question had been, What is a Witch? she would not have been able to tell; and I question whether it might not have put his Reverence to some trouble to define: The Parish having lodg'd that Name over her for some Years, the poor simple Creature own'd her self to be what they had stigmatiz'd her for, without either knowing the Hazard of Confession, or the Properties of a Witch. The second Question is as unfair as the first: For she not being supposed to know the Meaning of a Witch in the Latitude, her Accusers took it, so by that second Question

stion they involv'd the poor stupid Creature in a Plot against her own Life. If the Question had follow'd, about the Modus of her bewitching, she would have been as much at a loss as to have defin'd a Witch. The Third Question about her Familiar, is equally ensnaring, she not knowing the meaning of the Term, or the Use a Familiar is put to: The Parson help'd her out with a leading Question. Then as to her Confession of having liv'd in that Course 16 Years, I take to be no more than a bare Computation of the Time the Parish had accounted her so. The last is as fair as the rest, *viz.* What induc'd her to such a Familiarity with the Devil? when we have no account of any she made use of. What Familiarity this was, should likewise have been enquir'd into: The original Contract between them produc'd, an Account likewise how the Commerce between them had been carry'd on; In what manner she acted under the Devil? But instead of this, we have the old dry Answer, a wicked Mind, and that she using to curse her Neighbours, the Devil took advantage over her. Why is not the particular Advantage the Devil took over her explain'd?

No

No doubt, the Devil takes advantage over every Person that transgresses, but not so as to bring him under his immediate Power and Influence: Neither do I believe the Devil took any more advantage over her, than any common Sinner. But the Questions and Answers are so prettily adapted, and contriv'd so well for shortning the Dispute, and ensnaring the poor senseless Creature in a few Words, that I cannot help believing but the whole Catechism, both Question and Answer, was contriv'd by the Priest. Ay! But here is Self-Conviction, she is condemn'd out of her own Mouth, and what necessity is there of farther Evidence. But consider the Creature that thus condemns her self: A poor, stupid ignorant Wretch, that had been harras'd out of her Senses, threatned by all the Parish, Brow-beaten by the Justice, loaded with 20 hard-mouth'd Depositions, closeted by Priests, told the Advantages of confessing, and perhaps, that a frank Discovery might be of use to her. I say, weighing all these Circumstances, What could be expected from this poor Wretch under this Consternation? But however, it is no Rarity to find these reputed Socerers and Witches, accusing themselves of what they were never guilty,

even of killing Persons, when they have been actually alive, either out of an unaccountable Vanity of distinguishing themselves, or a vain Design of making themselves fear'd.

After this, we are entertain'd with a merry Account of Caterwauling, and with such variety of Accents, as are seldom heard but about Midnight. But we find *Ann Thorn's* Fits continuing violent upon her, and taking notice of no Person; but when *Jane Wenham* was brought into the Room, she flew up with great Strength and Fury, crying out, *What are you come to torment me*, and this done twice successively, once when all the Family had given over *Anne Thorn* for dead.

It must be allow'd, that all Persons labouring under those violent Fits as *Ann Thorn* did, have their seeing and hearing much more exquisite (tho' deprav'd) than others, in regard of the abundance of Animal Spirits which are contain'd and engendred, insomuch that it may be affirm'd, that the greatest part of their Blood is spiritualiz'd or converted into animal Spirits. Now we may rationally suppose, that *Anne Thorn* having spent her Fury upon *Jane Wenham* in the former Encounter, that long Intermision
out

out of which she could hardly be provok'd, but at the Appearance of *Jane Wenham*, may be ascrib'd to the great Expence and Waste of Animal Spirits in her last Fit, which she was forc'd to repair, by giving the Remainder of her Spirits time to breed more.

In the next place, we meet with an enchanting Pin, which young *Chauncy* takes out of *Jane Wenham's* Hand, and pricks her with, and at last fetches out a *Watry Serum*; by which, I presume, they mean a Serous Blood. And truly, no more could be expected from a Woman advanc'd in Years, who liv'd low, and perhaps might have some other reason for such a Scarcity of florid Blood. But after this, we find *Jane Wenham* goes home, and passes the Night in Singing and Dancing, saying, the Maid should be well that Night: Was there ever such a Mixture of Frenzy, Simplicity, and Unconcernedness? Truly, I am apt to think, *Jane Wenham* her self was a little touched, by being so often put to the Torture of Ill-Tongues, and more an Object of Pity than Revenge.

Now comes on a second-sighted Evidence, who sees Pins convey'd to *Anne Thorn* by an invisible Means. 'Tis Pity there had been any more Depositions,

this is so conclusive: It would puzzle a Judge whether to try the Criminal or the Evidence: For the seeing an invisible Power, looks very dangerous.

After this, these Witch-hunters make use of an infallible Secret of proving *Jane Wenham* a Witch, by putting some of *Anne Thorn's* Urine into a Stone Bottle, tying the Cork down, and setting it over the Fire.

I presume this Experiment, was made at the Instigation of Mrs. *Gardiner*, who was the prime She-Undertaker in this great Affair. If the Clergy were concern'd with the Maid's Urine, they would oblige the World with giving them a *Rationale* of its working such surprising Effects.

In short, these busie People were teasing *Jane Wenham* upon every Occasion, that they had brought her to Fits at last, and it's no wonder to find her falling into the Alternatives of Grief and Joy.

Before *Jane Wenham* is sent to Goal, Mr. *Strut* and Mr. *Gardiner* make another Effort upon her, and remind her of her former Confession, which she poor Creature took little Notice, of being full of Evasions. By which we may learn, how little she knew of the Consequence of her confessing what she did to to the
Parsons;

Parsons ; but she finding they improv'd it to her Disadvantage ; and being advis'd, I presume, to lie more upon her Guard, was shy in answering, and told them, *They lay in wait for her Life*. Being ask'd in what manner she contracted with the Devil ? she said, an Old Man spit upon her. A notable Method of Bargaining, and a pretty Invitation into his Service, and the newest way of Signing and Sealing between Parties that one shall hear of. I have read in your Books of Demmography, something that looks more solemn ; as that the Devil, in order to make People renounce God, usually makes them touch a Book, which contains several abstruse Characters, and then threatens to throw them in a deep Lake of Black-water, if they don't instantly perform the Renunciation : Then at the Rendezvous of their Sabbath-meetings, he gives them a past of Black Millet, and the Liver of an unbaptized Child, which has a Vertue in it of making them keep the Devil's Secrets. He likewise sucks the Blood of the Left-foot of the Sorcerer, or Witch ; with the like. These look like formal Initiations : But this poor Wretch was only spit upon by an old Farmer ; perhaps in Spleen

Spleen, or Derision, and possibly pi---s'd on, and this instantly debs her a Witch.

Passing by the two senseless Depositions of *Isaiah Wright*, and *Thomas Harvey*, we are next presented with an enchanted Pillow, with a great many Cakes of small Feathers; which, how great a Wonder soever the Priests made of it, is no surprize to the *Upholsterers*, who meet with such Prodigies every Day, in the ordinary Course of Business. As to the Maids being better after the burning the Feathers, it's no wonder, People in *Anne Thorn's* Condition being always reliev'd by the Smell of such Volatiles.

The last wonderful Phænomenon is, *Jane Wenham's* appearing to her in the Shape of a Cat. Now setting aside the Viciousness of *Anne Thorn's* Opticks, and the irregular Motion of her Spirits, which made her take a Cow for a Tree, and a Man for an Horse. I deny that there can be any such Transformation of an Humane Creature into a Cat, Dog, Hare, or any other Species. It is not possible, either in Soul or Body. Not in the Soul, for that would be a sort of Mortality, to which the Soul is not subject. The Sorceries and magical Effects of Evil Spirits may, if God permits them, stop the Passages of our Senses, disturb them,

them, and enfeeble the Organs, but they cannot annihilate and extinguish the reasonable Soul, efface the Image of God, to substitute a brutal Soul in its place. But if it should be alledg'd, that the reasonable Soul sequesters it self, and makes room for the other, that cannot be done without the intire Death of the Body. Nor is it any more possible that two Souls, the Reasonable and the Brutal, should be joined together, for then there would be two essential Forms in the same Subject, which cannot be allow'd according to Physical Principles. Nor is the Transformation of the Body more possible; for this Vessel cannot be changed in order to substitute another to the reasonable Soul, which is also improper to vivifie and organize the Body of a Beast. This Head, this Humane Brain, in which the Imagination is lodg'd, and in general, all the Members of the whole Body, are so aptly compos'd for the Functions of a reasonable Soul, that it cannot be lodg'd in the Head and Body of a Brute.

I shall take notice but of one ridiculous Passage more, and so close up my Remarks upon the Narrative, which is, that of *Jane Wenham's* coming to *Anne Thorn's* Window, after her Commitment,

ment, and threatning to torment her.

Now I thought it was a received Opinion, That Witches had no Power over a Person after being in the Hands of Justice. But supposing they have, a Query very naturally occurs; How comes it to pass, if these miserable Wretches have Liberty to get out of Prison, that they are such Fools to return, and expose themselves to the almost inevitable Danger of suffering the Torments appointed in such Cases. At this rate, we must believe they learn no Wit by conversing with the Devil.

Having briefly run over the Narrative, according to the Promise I made you at first, *Sir*, I proceed to shew how fallacious the Proofs of a Person's being a Witch are, and consequently ought never to extend to loss of Life. In *Germany*, People have a fine time of it: A bare Report that the Person is a Sorcerer, or a Witch, is enough: They are immediately upon that imprison'd, and then interrogated; if they deny it, they are put to the Torture; if they own it, they pronounce their own Sentence. It is not so bad with us, God be thanked, but the Proof against the Criminals of this kind, amongst us, is for the most part very precarious, the chief Evidence
against

against them being generally taken from Persons said to be bewitch'd by them, who are for the most part distemper'd in Mind, and consequently their Attestation is of no more weight than a Person's under a Delirium.

If any Mischief befalls a Person, or his Family, after the passionate, but impotent threats of an Old Woman, it's a sure Argument of her being a Witch ; as if the Muttering of a few Words should conceal in them the occult Malignity of an immediate Poison, or that a Wish should be able to infect Cattle with the Murrain, or that God, whose Omnipotence but very rarely transcends the Laws of Nature, should allow them to be violated continually, to oblige a petulant peevish old Woman, and the Devil be still at her Devotion.

But if there be no Occasion given, if Envy, Revenge, Malice, or Power, fall in with Ignorance, they may prove fatal to any destitute of Friends : Nay, some Performances, the like of which have not been seen before, in which appear some Motions, of which the Springs are unknown, have been sufficient to fix the Brand of a Sorcerer upon a Person. A learned Man at *Paris* was accus'd of Magick, for printing a Commentary on the Tenth Book of *Euclid* ; and a *Norman* Gentleman observing from the Barometer, that it would not be long be-

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fore it rain'd, got his Hay mow'd whilst the fine Weather lasted, which made the Country People report, he held a Correspondence with the Devil. The Water Experiment to try Witches, is the most fallacious of any, so is that of Marks about the Body : A Mole or Wart, or any Excreescency, passing current for the Stamp of the Devil. It would be endless to recount the several idle Tokens the Country People have of Witchcraft, and not one of them with the least Shadow of Reason.

Now that the Vulgar should ascribe every thing that's a little surprizing, to Witchcraft, is no wonder ; but that Clergymen, Men suppos'd to have made some Improvement in Physick, should give into the little crude Notions of Nurses and Old Women, about Things which might easily be solv'd by natural Causes, is astonishing; but there is a Vulgus amongst the learned, who, because they cannot readily assign a Cause for the Event, as being less obvious to Sense, presently conclude it preternatural. To own their Ignorance, 'twould put them into too great a Confusion, or give them too much Trouble to search into these Causes. 'Tis a surer as well as a shorter way, for their Reputation and Ease, to cry it up at once for a Miracle. By that they free themselves from many perplexing
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Queries; and intermixing the specious Pretext of Religion with it, they seem to advance God's Glory.

I think, amongst the few good Things that *Lewis XIV.* has done, this ought to be mention'd, that he has alter'd the Proceedings against Magic and Witchcraft, turning the Penalty of Death into Banishment, and afterwards by a Decree of the Council of State in 1672, order'd that all the Prisons in *Normandy* should be set open to all Persons that were detained for those Crimes.

Before we take our leave of this Subject, we must examine a little into this Exorcism by Prayer, which we have reserved for the last. This Exorcism is of a very ancient Date, practis'd amongst the People of *Greece*. But as it was manag'd at that time, it became scandalous. It was perform'd generally by mean and mercenary old Women, who made it their Business to go and read certain Forms of Prayer, in order to pacify Persons and Houses. This Trade of an Exorcist was accounted dishonourable in these Days, upon the Score of its being a pious Fraud: For which Reason the Orator *Æschines*, Son to a Woman who had practis'd it, was ignominiously treated by *Demosthenes*. And I fear our modern Exorcists will find as little Credit amongst the Judicious, especially if all the Exorcisms are perform'd like that upon *Anne Thorn*. Here is a poor Maid Epileptick, Hysterical, Lunatick by turns: The Priest comes and prays by her in one of her Fits, which lasts more or less, according to the Disposition of her Animal Spirits. The Fit goes off in its due Course, and this is call'd an Exorcism. I do say, any one that

sprinkles Water in a Person's Face that's going to swoon, has a better Claim to an Exorcist, than these. I thought in all true Exorcisms, the Evil Spirit was cast out and entirely banish'd, and left the Patient with some Struggles; still we find him returning into this Exorcis'd Person at Pleasure: But perhaps it was not the same Devil, and 'twere more for the Priests Credit to give out it was a fresh Demon every time: So having a Legion upon their Hands, they would have the Reputation of the greatest Kill-Devils in the Kingdom. It is with indignation, to be serious, a Man sees such bare-fac'd Impostures walk about in the Face of the World: But we presume, they who would impose on the World in this manner, hope to find their Account in it, and that nothing but Self-Interest could induce them to propagate such Delusions.

If they could once fix this Belief in the Minds of the People, that they were indued with a special Power of dispossessing Persons, and assisting them in preternatural Streights and Exigencies, by virtue of their Sacerdotal Office, how strangely would these Surmises work in time, and not only attract the Devotion of the Simple to them, but likewise weighty Offerings? Some such Design must be at the Bottom of this Delusion, and the Multitude of superstitious People at this time of Day, may be a Party, for ought I know, sufficient to support it: Nay, if once a Priest could bring his Parishioners to believe this power of Exorcising, I don't doubt but in time he might graft more pretended

pretended Miracles upon that Stock, and set up at last, for driving away the *Plague*, curing Cattle of the Murrain, boast of a sovereign Remedy against the Tooth-Ach, recover lost Goods, and in short, be resorted to as a Prophet upon all Occasions. As this would not only enrich them, and transfer the Wealth of the Parish into their Hand, so likewise it would raise their Persons into greater Esteem with the World. What Honours could be thought too great for such a Wonder-working Priest? and when once conferr'd by the Laity, How would the Priest improve them, till at last they might be tempted to put in a modest Claim to be exempted from all politick and positive Laws, unless of their own making? Nay, who could think, but that they who were entrusted with such a specific and God-like power, were the fittest to be Legislators themselves, and that the Gods were come down to us in the Likeness of Men? Nay, if our Priesthood in this degenerate State, could perswade their People, that they were capable of doing so great a Miracle as exorcising a possess'd Person, they might preserve their Esteem and Veneration without the labourious way of keeping up unblemish'd Sanctity, and Exemplariness of Life. This Point once gained, How expos'd and open should we lie to all the Inroads of *Popish* Superstition? We might then expect to see *Spiritual Fairs* set up in every Parish, where hallow'd Wax-Candles, Amulets, Charms, holy Oil, and a thousand Tinklets would be sold, as so many effectual Devil-Drivers, in the Absence of the Priest. But to return to our Chevaliers of the Exorcism: I don't apprehend, with what

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Colour of Certainty these Gentlemen can attribute the Abatement of *Anne Thorn's* Fits to the Success of their Prayers? Indeed they chose a proper time to prove the Force of their spiritual Drugs, even when she was in her Fits; and they having a round Number of Collects to ply her with, it was ten to one if the Paroxysm did not abate in that Time which was forthwith ascrib'd to Prayer; whereas I would venture any Wager, that the Maid had come to her self (as they vulgarly say) within that time, without the Assistance of those Prayers. Not that I would here be thought to derogate from the Prayers of our Church, and the admirable Collects contain'd in the several Offices: No, they shall ever have my highest Esteem; but I think them of no Use in the Case before us, as neither being adapted to the Circumstance, or a Method any ways recommended in holy Writ. For I must beg leave to interpret that Passage of our Saviour's of *this kind, goeth not out but by Prayer and Fasting*, very different from the Reverend's Exposition. By their making use of this Text in their Narrative, to justify the Efficacy of Prayer in such Cases, one would think that they understood the Saying of our Saviour, as if Prayer and Fasting were the proper Methods for dispossessing an Evil Spirit: Whereas, if we attend to the Context, we shall find it very different. This Expression of our Saviour's has its Rise from a Man's bringing his Son to him, who was possess'd with a dumb Spirit, having first try'd the Power of his Disciples, who were unable to cast him out. Hereupon Christ reproves them for their want of Faith, and casts out this dumb and deaf

deaf Spirit: His Disciples taking an Opportunity to ask him, Why they could not cast him out? he told them, this *kind can come forth by nothing but by Prayer and Fasting*. Now by *Prayer and Fasting* in this place, Christ means the Preparatory Acts of Devotion and Mortification, in order to obtain so sublime a Faith as was requisite to the subduing of those Evil Spirits; not that the bare *Opus operatum* of Prayer or Fasting, was of any Power to expel a Demon, or chase away a Spirit: For we never find our Saviour making use of any Form of Prayer, but with Authority commanding them forthwith to come out, which they did sometimes with Reluctance; and upon the Approach of our Saviour, knowing it was their last Effort, would leave very terrible Marks of their Rage behind them. Of these Evil Spirits quitting them, and the immediate Change for the better, the Demoniacs were forthwith sensible, and they never return'd. But in this Mock-Exorcism, we have no violent Struggles, but what were the immediate Effects of the Fit. The Maid is no ways sensible of any Spirit going out of her, she is tormented afresh in the Course of her Distemper; and one time, by the Priests own Confession, *Asmodeus* was deaf to the Liturgy. But one thing must not be omitted here, *viz.* that *Anne Thorn* never complain'd to these Divines, of the Devil's Uneasiness at the frequent Removes they gave him by Prayer; or that *Jane Wenham* finding her Power wasting by the frequent Application of that Lip-salve, did not, amongst other Threatnings, warn *Anne Thorn* against this frequent Prayer: No, we find her, by their own Account, equally successful,

cessful, and triumphing over their sham Miracles, and themselves expos'd as a Company of raw Artists.

As far as I can learn, the dispossessing of Evil-Spirits was one of the noblest Exercises of Power Christ made use of whilst he was upon Earth, and we find the Apostles (tho' far superior to any of their Successors, in Faith and good Works) not sufficiently qualify'd for that great Undertaking; and therefore, methinks it would be but a becoming Modesty in the Priesthood, to examine their own Lives and Conversation, and their Consciences would soon make a Report how far short they fall of those Qualifications necessary to so great a Work. This Method would abate their Pride, and humble their spiritual Sufficiency, and that Glory which they assume to themselves now, upon a supposititious Miracle, would then appear to them as the most desperate Presumption. The spiritual Gifts and Graces they convey to us in their Ministerial Capacity, is all the Power we know they are vested with at present, and aspiring to more, is the only Means to weaken what they are allowed to have. If to this, the Clergy would be a little more conversant with the History of Diseases, and enquire more narrowly into the Physical Causes of things, several Effects would not appear so perplexing, neither would they be so forward to ascribe those Diseases to the Devil, where Nature is primarily concern'd.

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